

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED PLANTS

LONG-BEAKED BALD-RUSH

(Rhynchospora scirpoides)

DESCRIPTION

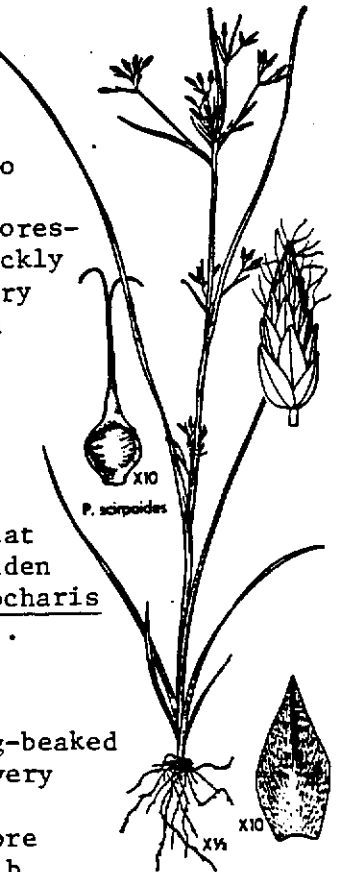
Long-beaked Bald-rush is a slender inconspicuous annual sedge, 8 to 35 cm (3-15") tall, found on sparsely vegetated pond shores. This species appears only when pond levels are extremely low. The inflorescence has numerous chestnut-brown spikelets and flowers appear quickly followed by fruits from mid-July through September. Leaves are very narrow (1-3mm wide) with basal leaves and those midway up the stem much longer than those toward the upper stem.

HABITAT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Long-beaked Bald-rush is found on wet, sandy to peaty pond shores of coastal plain ponds where the water level fluctuates enough to keep the vegetation sparse. Other species found in the same habitat include Eriocaulon septangulare (Pipewort), Gratiola neglecta (Golden Pert), Utricularia spp. (Bladderworts), Juncus spp. (Rushes), Eleocharis spp. (Spike-rushes), and Scleria reticularis (Reticulate Nut-rush).

SIMILAR SPECIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Short-beaked Bald-rush (R. nitens) is very similar to Long-beaked Bald-rush except, as the name implies, the beak on the achene is very small and the spikelet is always a dull grey-brown. Slender Fimbristylis (Fimbristylis autumnalis) is also similar but much more slender, with slimmer spikelets and scales that show a green midrib.

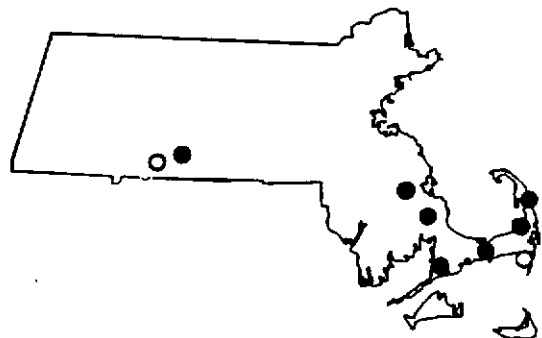


Gleason, H.A. The New Britton and Brown
Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern U.S.
and Adjacent Canada. New York Botanical Garden,
1932.

RANGE

R. scirpoides ranges from southeastern Massachusetts along the coastal plain to Florida and Texas, with disjunct populations located around the head of Lake Michigan.

(continued overleaf)



- Verified since 1978
- Reported prior to 1978

Distribution of Rhynchospora scirpoides Distribution in Massachusetts by Town

LONG-BEAKED BALD-RUSH (continued)

POPULATION STATUS

R. scirpoides is classified as a species of "Special Concern" in Massachusetts. Since 1978, it has been reported from 17 sites in the state; records from 8 additional locations were reported prior to 1978. In Massachusetts, populations vary enormously from pond to pond and year to year. With favorable conditions of extreme pond draw-down, populations may number up to 1000, and under other lesser conditions populations may only include a few scattered individual plants. Factors contributing to this species rarity include its occurrence at the northern edge of its range, development and recreational use of coastal plain ponds, pond contamination from run-off and faulty septic systems, scarcity of specifically suitable habitat, and probable limited dispersal capabilities.